

DALLAS, TEXAS
TIMES HERALD

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EVENING 191,378
SUNDAY 198,150

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RANSOM WOULD BE HUMILIATING

Conduct, Timing of Parleys
Mystify Capital Observers

By CHARLES O. GRIDLEY

Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The United States by now should be accustomed to ridicule from Fidel Castro. The misdirected efforts by leading Americans to bail out 1,100 survivors of the ill-fated Cuban invasion attempt of April 17, 1961, are of greater concern. They bring ridicule of nebulous plans to help the real heroes of the invasion, confined under revolting conditions since.

Most people recall the "Tractors for Freedom" fiasco which followed the invasion failure by a month, in which a citizen committee headed by Milton Eisenhower, Walter Reuther and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt met with Castro to discuss a trade of 500 bulldozers for the prisoners, whose number was then given as 1,214.

Dictator's Demand

The Cuban dictator finally demanded \$28 million in cash, credit or heavy-duty farm equipment for the prisoners, and the negotiations fell through.

The committee claimed that Castro had failed "to keep his end of the bargain," but there was no evidence they could raise the ransom which he demanded.

Now an even more nebulous deal is being discussed, with James B. Donovan, New York lawyer and Democratic nominee for the Senate, shuttling between New York and Havana to discuss a cash ransom which, according to unofficial sources, might run as high as \$62 million.

Donovan has no official status, but apparently reports to the White House. He previously had a similar role in the exchange of Francis G. Powers, the captured U2 pilot, for Col. Rudolf I. Abel, a Russian spy, early this year.

Political Mystery

Why the negotiations for the prisoner ransom should come to a peak during a political campaign, in which administration policy toward Cuba and its Communist occupation is already under attack, is a political mystery. Donovan, whose nomination for the Senate is attributed to White House pressure, has given practically no attention to regular campaigning. His opponent, Sen. Javits, has assumed that if ransom negotiations can be completed, the prisoners will be "sprung" before the election as a coup which cannot be matched. But Javits has been kept informed of developments by official sources.

And how about the money? A committee of Cuban refugees which has worked constantly to raise the ransom demanded by Cuba (the amount of which has never been stipulated) has reported, no more than \$200,000 available for that purpose. It has been assumed that Donovan must have much more than that to offer in his conversations with Castro.

The millions demanded by Castro can only come from government sources and the only government source mentioned

here is the Central Intelligence Agency, funds for which are secretly appropriated in amounts never revealed, but said to be between \$750 millions and one billion dollars annually.

Aside from the operation of the huge CIA headquarters in near-by Virginia with its several thousand employees (this number also is secret) and the other thousands abroad, this money can be spent at the discretion of the President.

Undenied Report

The fact that Donovan's negotiations were apparently being conducted with White House approval has led to an undenied report in Washington that the ransom will be paid with CIA funds.

Whatever the source, such a concession to the Cuban dictator and his Communist controls would be humiliating to the United States. There is no official record of any money ransom by the government being paid before in the history of the U.S., one of whose historic mottoes, "Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute," has been credited to several historic figures.

If any ransom is paid out of U.S. funds, both houses of Congress are certain to conduct investigations into every angle of the deal. But the strangest part to observers here is how anyone could think its accomplishment would help Democratic candidates for Congress, especially the New York Democratic Senate nominee.